THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Government of Andhra Pradesh have approached Ministry of Defence for according security clearance permitting them to digitize topo sheets on various scales covering the entire state to facilitate their project relating to Hazard Mitigation. They have also requested for acquiring unmasked satellite data from NRSA.

The Defence Ministry has since approved the proposal to include Andhra Pradesh State Remote Sensing Application Centre (APSRAC) in the list of Government agencies authorised to digitize topo sheets already published by Survey of India, under the existing parameters and conditions.

Accidents during training of Pilots

4725. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of accidents taken place during the training of trainee pilots in the Air Forfce during the year 1998-99 and 1999-2000;

(b) whether it is a fact that many of the aircrafts being used for training are obsolete and Government have also thought for purchasing new aircrafts for the above mentioned purpose;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what steps are being taken by the Indian Air Force to reduce the number of accidents?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The number of training related accidents during 1998-99 and 1999-2000 has been 02 and 04 respectively.

(b) and (c) The aircrafts used for initial training are operating well within the total technical life and are not obsolete. However, the Mig-21 aircraft presently being used for stage-III training of fighter pilots has been considered sub-optimal. Therefor, it has been proposed to induct Advanced Jet Trainers into the Air Force.

(d) A High Powered Committee on Fighter Aircraft Accidents (COFAA) was constituted under the chairmanship of Scientific Adviser to Raksha Mantri to analyse the causes of accidents which submitted its report in September, 1997. It has made certain recommendations to minimise accident rate. Implementation of these recommendations would involve changes in

organisational structure, procedures, training, design, technology etc. necessary instructions have been issued to the agencies/Departments concerned to take suitable action on the recommendations of the Committee. About 55 out of 84 recommendations have been implemented so far.

Hijacking of Japanese Vessel by Pirates

4726. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether hijacking of Japanese vessel carrying thousand tonnes of crude oil from Malaysia to Haldia in West Bengal by sea pirates at Malakka Jaldamrumadhya in West Bengal has been reported in some newspapers on 4th March, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whetehr the sea pirates of Mallakka Jaldamrumadhya area are hijacking the foreign vessels in the area on regular basis in connivance of Coastal Guards of Indian Navy;

(d) whether Government propose to take action in order to check rising terrorism of pirates in Indian Ocean;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (f) Government is aware of the news & item captioned "Ship for Haldia vanishes at sea" that appeared in the Telegraph dated 4th March, 2000. The place Mallakka Jalamrumadhya indicated in the Question is not located in West Bengal, but is a strait between Indonesia and Malaysia leading to Singapore. The Indian Coast Guard (CG) was first informed of the vessel MT Global Mars not having reached its destination by the Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) Kuala Lumpur on the 29th February, 2000. The said vessel had departed Port Kelang in malaysia on 22nd February, 2000 for Haldia with 6000 MT of Palm oil products and it was presumed to have been hijacked. On receipt of the information, CG ships and aircraft were alerated to keep sharp look out for the said vessel while on routine surveillance in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone.

The 17 crew members of the missing ship were, subsequently rescued by a fishing boat off the west coast of Thailand on 10th March, 2000. The rescued